

4/17/12 9:46 AM

## Strains on the fail-safe system

I find my first RAND memo, "Strains on the fail-safe system" and open it. The first sentence relates precisely to the dream I just finished in bed.

"If 'an order is an order,' and we can predict with 100% confidence that 'if LeMay said it, they'll do it,' then we need have no worries about the fail-safe system; the positive control instructions are perfectly explicit that, 'no order to go ahead' means 'you are ordered to come back.'"

In my dream, I say to the experienced spies I am working with: I know you are trained, "This is what we want you to do; and you must do it exactly as we say." But, I say to them, "I never wanted to be an intelligence agent." I want to be able to adapt to the circumstances. T

Their orders were to make a call (from Vienna, where we are) at exactly nine o'clock; but the chit they were given to make the call with, to pay for it, will work only at 8 or 11. Impasse. I suggest calling at 8 and asking "her" to call us at 9. "What could be a problem with that? Very short call, just saying, 'call us at 9', no mention of names.

"She might be sleeping. She might have someone with her at 8."

"So what?"

I say, "I know, the idea is that the plans are made by a local person who knows the lay of the land exactly, or some wiser head above; if you deviate from the plans, you are more likely to go astray. Nevertheless, circumstances arise that make it impossible...why did they give you a chit that only works at 8 or 11 anyway?" (I think to ask them, how does the chit work, that has that effect? And does it have to be precisely at 8: are there minutes of leeway? But I don't get to that.)

Finally I, after all, come up with the answer: "Pay for the call yourself, at 9. How much can it be? They'll refund it, or they won't. But it will get the job done." I reflect, they've succeeded; by demanding you do it exactly as they say, they stimulate you to come with a way of doing exactly that.

(Later, I think to ask our hostess: Is there something nice to buy in Vienna? My wife's birthday is coming up, on the 26<sup>th</sup> (of April: as it is). I suppose things are very expensive in Vienna, for Americans...the exchange rate? She's lately come to like jewelry. Or something leather...a handbag? Isn't Austria good for leather? Or crystal?)

Anyway, this is the premise of my memo, of July, 1958, almost sixty years ago:

That a precisely-worded order may be regarded as ambiguous under some circumstances, admitting of more than one response. The precise signal coming through—say, an absence of a go-ahead order—might not be regarded as the signal necessarily intended or sent by higher command. There is “noise” in the communication channel. The intended signal, perhaps “go ahead,” might have been blocked, by “nature” or even by enemy action. The receiver asks himself, “How likely is it that “Go” was sent; and how likely that, in that event, it would fail to get through?” In an actual “no warning” attack (perhaps by a submarine-launched missile) against command posts, the Go order would not be sent. And the warning evidence that led to the positive-control launch might have been the precursor to an actual attack on command and control that precluded following up with a Go order.

So the probability that “no signal” means “go” (not, don’t go) is equivalent to the probability that an enemy attack is underway. During an international crisis, that is...higher than usual. And if the alert planes have been allowed to get to the positive control line (which may never have happened before), the probability in the pilot’s mind that the warning was no false alarm may be very high indeed.

(This inference could be countered by practice alerts in which planes routinely get up to the positive control line and then are expected to go back; rehearsals in which the planes do carry bombs. This would seem dangerous, especially at first (and there should be no “rehearsal” during a crisis! Though that would magnify the chance of “disobedience” if there were a serious alert during a crisis!). The danger could be reduced by having communications planes near the positive control line that could detect and warn off any planes that were disobeying, in rehearsals. But in fact, my informants felt there were no such rehearsals.

What I was hypothesizing in 1958 was exactly what happened in the Cuban Crisis:

--unprecedented alerts (to Boston, etc. As in 1969!) Planes sent to many civilian fields. D...

--Defcon 2: sent without authority (? Polmar, ) by CINCSAC (the sadist, the destroyer of Tokyo, Power); sent in the clear (without orders? CHECK)

--International crisis.

--Planes sent to positive control line; possibly beyond it (CHECK)

--SU sub under “bombardment,” not understanding “signal” (which has not been explained to it); under extreme physical stress; fearing death; wanting “preemptive vengeance”; wanting to preserve “honor” of SU navy; (nuclear-armed, of which the US ships stressing it are unaware, and higher command unaware, so that an explosion would be unexplained, possibly a high-level SU attack)

--Inability to communicate to subs. (yet armed with nucs)



--Actual orders very explicit, from Moscow: no launch without explicit order. Yet the commanders are not sure these orders will be obeyed, under attack.

--possibility of actual attack on errant U-2 over Pole; or encounter of SU attackers with US defenders armed with nuclear weapons;

--bypassing of multiple-controls on MM missiles (safety catches off)

--SAM does disobey order (to wait for order from local commander) in firing at U-2.

--Castro "disobeys" Khrushchev; US misinterprets, not imagining that Castro is not "under control." (See Pleiku, Bien Hoa, Qui Nhon...)(Tonkin Gulf attack on August 2)

My investigations come close to being a decade of pursuit of just the questions raised in this first memo. Which in turn comes out of my study of uncertainty, going back to 1952 but especially 1957 (the previous year) under Patrick Suppes, and my first conjectures about "ambiguity" (1957? My first year as a Junior Fellow? Or, 1958, just before I came to RAND? Ambiguity is not reflected (though the word occurs) in my memo; nor in my 1959 Lowell Lectures! I used Bayesian probabilities. (define in terms of odds). Note my picking up on AJW's premise that "warning will be ambiguous." (That could mean, just, "uncertain," though measured by probability, precise ones; but it better means my "ambiguity"! Each instance of a serious warning will appear unique, in its context, though "low-level" indications of attack will be frequent and numerous. Note the cases where war was averted because an operator "just didn't believe" the signal! (Yeltsin, in 1995. Cautious radar operator in August 4, 1964.)

Yet, also the opposite: Pearl Harbor! (radar operator; perhaps actual SI); Stalin in 1941! In general, surprise attacks (usually preceded by warnings that were disbelieved! Like "catastrophes" in general!) Faits accomplis, and faits malaccomplis.

Cuba II itself (McCone disbelieved by his own analysts!) (he was looking at motive, and possibility/capability. But they didn't believe SU could suppress warning indications that effectively. To him, "absence of evidence" was NOT "evidence of absence": they disagreed, wrongly! (I.e., neo-cons COULD have been right about Saddam's WMDs; analysts had been wrong about Iraq in 1991, nuclear program; Republicans were right in C-II: that made the situation twice as dangerous politically for JFK; they had even made Cuba the key issue in the election (very unusual, especially for an off-year?); the public had the immediate opportunity to choose the people who had been right, punish those who were wrong.

(This would have been true in 2004, if Kerry had been "right", and the Dems; but they hadn't! Kerry's choice, being "cautious" in 2003, against my warning, cost him

an easy nomination and cost him the election; but more, it cost the Iraqis eight more years or so of US occupation and war, and it cost the US...

[As I got up this morning, I was thinking: I haven't found the "voice," the tone, for this memoir. I thought of mentioning this to Robert.

But it might be, the tone requires (oh hear) invoking Type I and Type II errors, the probability of "error" or loss of control in complex systems, the impossibility of control during nuclear war, the likelihood of disobedience to precise orders...

See Power/LeMay and Anderson (CNO) as "elite subordinates" (with a belief, exactly like the Germans in WWI, that: time is not on our side, either in Cuba (missiles coming in, becoming operational—though some were already! Or strategically, with SU—they'll get ICBMs, better WWII now than later.

(like Israelis, confronting hardening by Iran);

Germans in 1914: time is not on our side (Russian mobilization is improving); preemption is better than "riding out attack, retaliating"; war is inevitable; better now than later, and better by striking first than second; so striking first (preemptively, on "warning") now is best (if they're not attacking us now, despite warning, they will be later, when it is less advantageous for us).

Austria wants us to back up their intervention in Serbia (occasioned by a "good excuse, the assassination of Ferdinand), which will lead to Russian mobilization; fine, this is the occasion for "war now," rather than later, with Russia and France. (yet the Schlieffen plan required heavy gambling, including hope (?) that the UK would not come in; it was hardly a "sure thing"—and it failed!)

(For Germans, Austrian ultimatum and Russian mobilization were just good excuses, the latter "compelling": for a preemptive attack on France (!) and Russia now rather than later. Germany was "cocked": wanted a war now (as Allies claimed, afterward: despite the fact that they did have a relatively good excuse—Russian mobilization, which was not quite "inevitable")--except for backing Austrian ultimatum (apologists for Germany have to explain that as "compelled," which it wasn't, or as relexive, unreflective, not looking ahead...if they want to argue that Germany didn't want or choose world war.)

(Some British also wanted war "sooner than later"? (and, Irish crisis). How about Russia? Could they have had contrary vision from Germans: namely, that war sooner was better for **them**? This would be an explosive situation. Did they? Why would they have thought that? Otherwise, if they agreed with the Germans that war later was better than war sooner for the Russians [compare, striking first vs. striking second], that should have affected their willingness to mobilize in response to Austrian ultimatum (i.e., to "rise to the bait" in German eyes). CHECK with TR: a big uncertainty here (for me) is the Russian incentives. (and where was France in this?)



has SAMS (or Migs?); Indonesia (before China has armed insurgents); Guatemala (before Czechs have armed Guatemalans);

Note that I **also** had all this in mind, from Sidney Fay: WWI mobilization plans = GEOP plans . (And SAC definitely did think, with good reason, that war sooner, in late 50's or early 60's, was VERY much better than later. That was even enhanced when their early estimates of SU ICBMs were disconfirmed in 1961.

That meant that WWII would be **very much better for US** in 1962 than they thought (officially) in 1961 that it would be in 1962, and very much better than it would be in 1964-65, or later (assuming SU would "catch up": a self-confirming prophecy, reflecting what the US and SAC did do in 1962 (and 1963: demanding more inspections, to get CTB; so K didn't have a CTB to his credit in 1963-64.

JFK, by not overriding JCS on this, did not save his own life (!) (though he was probably thinking of 1964 election); he also contributed to loss of Khrushchev in favor of Brezhnev and the SU military (did this enter anyone's mind, in 1963, wrt the CTB? Would they have favored K, as they should? Of course, this was **good** from the JCS/MIC point of view! (Would they have preferred "stable minimum deterrence"? NO! Never.)

The needless insistence on a larger number of inspections, in 1956-63, cost the world the chance of avoiding both the US and the SU buildups, including MIRV. (What would the balance have looked like with a CTB? Could the Gilpatric Committee recommendations of **major cuts** in 1965 have been carried out: to avert proliferation, both horizontal and vertical (not considered by Gilpatric?! Which did not foresee MIRV, or increased SLBM accuracy; or probably, the effects of losing Khrushchev at the same time they were meeting!) (And the ABM pressure?!)

The point this is leading to: I could show the coherence of my concerns: not just discovering ad hoc instances of possible explosion (false alarms: the current problem) but my persistent pursuit of this possibility in different realms. (In C-II, strategic decisions, not just to launch but to deploy, to threaten).

And: threats! Threats and uncertainties; bargaining. Art of Coercion; Uses (and dangers!) of Madness (the incentive to feign or be mad; and the likelihood of being mad).

Problem: this makes it look more like a research paper, comparing situations (not all of my own experience; studies; which, after all, I did do (and can report on!)

My comparative Crisis study preceded by work on Vietnam, and motivated my participation in the PP! Then, study of FU (but that can be described as part of my 1964 crisis study).

This has the danger of making the book appear to be, and to be, a study rather than a story (what I found out, in sequence), because it emphasizes or reveals what I was looking for, and concerned about to begin with. It lessens the "surprise" of these discoveries for me and the reader, and undercuts the credibility of the "findings" (since they fitted into my model "so well," and confirmed my concerns and my surmises).

(Actually, I **was** surprised, and shocked and frightened, by the discoveries, despite my initial concerns and hypotheses that they were possible under these circumstances.)

(My concerns were a lot greater **after** my research and discoveries than before. And there were new ones: finding a lot more "madness" on **our** side than I had expected; and even less control.)

(TCS couldn't believe that K really had deployed warheads, even 20 (25?) years later. (Less madness in Reagan than many believed—unusual desire to pursue abolition--; yet, enough madness, in his commitment to ABM, which aborted his desire for abolition. Likewise, LBJ didn't want big war; but he got it, given his priorities (though less than JCS wanted).

In short: do I **have** to talk about probabilities, ambiguities ("paradox"?) and utilities, after all? (Or, can I talk about issues without using these terms? Difficult, perhaps not impossible).



Why was the "fail-safe" system invented? (To preserve a retaliatory role for airplanes; and to have a second-strike system at all before submarines were available and accepted;

See Sidney Hook, vs. "Fail-Safe" (the novel and movie): impossibility of UA, mad or loyal;

(Note: rehearsals for president of warning system are based on the assumption that launching can be rational for him, necessary, useful;

Supposed civilian control is meant to reassure the public that military men who believe war is inevitable, that sooner is better than later, and that it should begin with a first strike (Japanese: surprise attack; Barbarossa; (not: VN; Iraq; Kosovo; Gulf War; Libya; Afghanistan; not Hitler! Unless Russia. ) cannot or will not be allowed to carry this out.

It does not assure that.

(If SLBMs had been available before or at same time as ICBMs; on both sides; and if SLBM accuracy had developed simultaneously with ICBM accuracy...

(With  
Kear)

by LBJ. He planned (if Hanoi did not accept his terms) to win the war in Vietnam brutally on the anniversary of LBJ's perfidious near-success in denying him office.

Again, Richard Allen was involved in the intelligence effort against the administration on this, getting inside word from Henry Kissinger, among others. And again, there was private communication to a foreign head of state--Anna Chennault, among others (possibly Vann! though Vann may have done this on his own) to Thieu--urging him to refuse to take part in negotiations proposed by the President, in the interests of prolonging a war the President desired to settle.

(This particular instance seems to have major elements to support a serious legal charge of treason. Meanwhile, the families of some Iranian hostages are preparing a civil suit against Reagan and Bush--who were not officials at the time--for prolonging the captivity of their relatives).

The LBJ Administration had an "August surprise" for Goldwater in 1964. There was, in fact, much more to their intended use of the supposed Tonkin Gulf Incident and the resulting Tonkin Gulf Resolution than swelling LBJ's expected landslide in November. The Administration had a "February surprise" for the public up its sleeve for after the election, the intense planning for which, in which I represented the Office of Secretary of Defense on the first day, commenced on Election Day.

But no one in the Administration doubted that one of the obvious incentives for seizing the occasion for this first act of bombing against North Vietnam ("in reprisal" for what was at best an equivocal--in fact, it was later clear, a non-existent--attack, which on August 3 and 4 the US was consciously going very far to provoke) was its beautiful political consequences in boxing Goldwater in on one of his main campaign themes, essentially eliminating from the campaign his claim to be a more forceful (if not more prudent) manager of violence in pursuit of US interests.

What the Republicans presumably feared in the fall of 1962 was exactly the kind of initiative, with the identical political meaning and effects, that LBJ pulled off in August, 1964, 22 months later.

The team advising LBJ and executing his decisions in 1964 on this issue was almost identical to the one that served JFK in October 1962: McGeorge Bundy, Rusk, McNamara, McCone, Maxwell Taylor (the main person missing, aside from JFK, was his brother; LBJ himself had been a member of ExCom in 1962, and not at all, the transcript shows, its most hawkish member). What the Republicans feared from this team in 1962 was what they got in 1964.

The Republicans themselves were, of course, calling for forceful action and taunting the President for not delivering it: just like Goldwater in '64, the attacks on Carter in '80 for



5-9-12  
BHO/  
fun?  
2012!

letting the Iran hostage raid fail, and more recently (not in an election year) the Democratic taunting of George Bush for not backing up a coup attempt against Noriega in October 1989, taunts which led directly to Bush's invasion of Panama in December. As the Panama example shows particularly clearly, such challenges to the manliness and decisiveness of a President, made largely for domestic political advantage, have tragic consequences for many who cannot vote in the US. Their fear, then, was that he would take that issue away from them and even use it against them: by doing what they asked, arguably more or better than "their man" would have done, and successfully.

What Paterson and Brophy did not know in 1986 was what James Hershberg first revealed in 1987 and more extensively this summer: that Kennedy and McNamara had ordered and were monitoring closely plans and physical preparations for possible attacks on Cuba on a very unusually urgent basis, with maximum readiness ordered for October 20. The orders were given in late September and early October, two weeks before the Soviet missiles had been revealed in photography (and before the most credible reports of missiles, which led to the scheduling of the U-2 flight which located them).

(It is an interesting question just when Cotton made his prediction to his constituents? Was it, for example, before October 10, when Keating first asserted the presence of land-based missiles? (I suspect so). Could there have been a leak to Cotton or others of these politically consequential plans and preparations? At lower levels, a fair number of people in the Navy and Air Force could have known of physical preparations being made; and the large-scale, publicly-known maneuvers rehearsing an invasion might have seemed more suggestive of intent to Republicans, as to Russians and Cubans, than they ever did to scholars sympathetic to the Administration.)

It is not clear from the Paterson/Brophy (P/B) account in just what sense Republican hawks thought, after the event, that Kennedy had "contrived" the crisis that actually came transpired, for political benefit, or indeed, how he had "played politics" with it as Goldwater claimed. Unlike some doves, they didn't question that the Soviet deployment merited or even compelled blockade and the threat of attack, and most of them thought that he hadn't been forceful enough in his demands or in failing to attack and overthrow Castro. Just what did they suspect? (I need to check the references on this).

It would be very hard to construct a case that Kennedy did want or could have wanted the crisis that he got (however beneficial it turned out to be for him politically, in the event): i.e., that he wanted--or might conceivably have wanted, if the thought had occurred to him--the Soviets to send land-based missiles secretly to Cuba, in defiance of his public warnings and what he had taken to be their private assurances.

Once that unforeseen, politically ghastly situation had



Comparison with Turkey: a probable precedent — the <sup>JFK</sup> unusual — still,  
JFK did it.

Comparison (of JFK) with Hungary (US diets intense w/o SO  
intervention: but no US troops in Hungary, (unlike Berlin)  
no new ties, and supplies to Hungary...

Next: JFK going for a trade, from Oct. 17

like McN (vs Stevenson; Rusk  
but of the blockade)

Despite JFK's personal supn, he did not visit Berlin

(like McN, who <sup>personal</sup> ~~did~~ <sup>to</sup> visit Berlin...)

JFK wants a line of JCS and other banks about  
this matter — and wants McLane to bring replies  
on timeliness of this intell, not chasing!

(like Ball, with TGR!)

Stevenson on photos!

B blockade precluded attack on non-ops missiles;

did McN ever agree to attack on missiles?

(which he had "killed out" Oct 6)

JCS did not; perhaps doubted our capabilities (China)

McN, too?

(K didn't tell!)

PFK proposes doing in Berlin what K has done

(recently) in Cuba.

(Though JFK & Macmillan (Dale 5/3) did Cuba

as possibly K's Berlin — to be threatened if he grades Berlin.



Private or public deal was not necessary  
we could keep mining in Turkey

but JFK didn't know that - & the pressure  
K was under Sat. night! (Dallas 568)

(He was going for public trade - K offer!  
- as he indicated Sat morning!

(D... J... & ...)

Dallas 370: VCS kept up pressure for invasion  
"before they're financially backed" despite the  
knowing ministers were operational."

VCS recommended strike Monday, on Oct 28

"a few days later, "Anderson "We've been dead:"

LeMay - "greatest defeat" (?) - invasion



Smith p. 63  
see Miller on N amount of ending BW  
on Nov 28, 1969

While DUCK HOOK SAC ALERT WAS  
STILL ON



K didn't just initiate NATO — he initiated MRSMs  
to, the most questionable, destabilizing aspect of NATO —  
MRSMs — unusually, FS weapons (large not enough to  
demonstrate opponents)

Why not just use nukes? not examine  
if Moscow was informed,  
It would be limiting enough to JFK,  
to make him go into Berlin agats with  
a clandestine.

What honest, really, to MRSMs?  
Will, to ever all be back us. US —  
until NATOUS us. SO.

(So — RFR — give nukes to Germany!  
That wouldn't protect Berlin — or would it?  
Maybe too well — What Germany going  
on East Germany refusing!

Could Germany detect SU use of nukes, in  
war? She thinks not.  
\$CS?



C-II

Best Reasons of

Who was moving to file (extensive) ?  
(Pleig? - known)

Host of central (Brugioni - McN + Anderson)  
BRUGIONI -

Stone  
NYRB, 66

2 - wim deal - act of combat, but of date -  
"Chicken" - Dallas was right,  
as to the game played - Berlin!  
(Anderson critique!)  
used TCS - + me!

temptation to use news... → abolition (Baker on JFK/C-II)

Did K - rightly or wrongly - believe JFK was  
unusually prone to be pushed over?

or was JFK prone "saw" -

couldn't K have gotten very much with it -

if date right - with any pres?

(Would N have been asking for war?

— no C-II! Wall?

(Wf was it so important to NATO (Belmont?)  
to hold on to Berlin?

like TG!

eyeball to eyeball

C-II AS BLOWBACK - provocative Provocation!

X Walking across Niagara - Darling on the Wife (would on one bank?)  
which will back up ?! (Hans Ravel?)



CHRON of Disclosure  
on invasion plan  
Demure doc - Allison saw on way to Moscow Conf  
(Oct 8-12-62 Conf 1989 for 29  
readings) (for 89: McN, McG - "not serious")

George  
Dobson

for 29 - SK tells Moscow Conf - Castro but rejected  
1989  
upheld RS to K on Oct 26 (TIME?)  
(Alexander: "Volter to the line" (HA) SK denies "request"  
- "20 are warheads" (wrong) (no time news)

- 42 low troops

for 26 New York Conf: Hushkin to Moscow  
(Taylor - requires US int.)

(first disclosed 75-76; now does show invasion role  
BGL; Taylor

McN - McG - "but if boys know of Moscow, they  
might have taken that more seriously."  
[+ invasion operations

Moscow would stimulate  
"Doubts that volts would have been issue  
of US. intervention" (yes, no doubt!)  
Wagner yes - + see Northwest!

[McB: Denver Summit 1988]

for 28-89 20 CBRMs Volkoyev  
"20 in Cuba" - "Doubled" (no - tripled? planned to  
(American flight, to)

1970 - K Remains (Jalbutt)



1969 - REK private trash  
ults.

(confined in 1982, "Kennis" time  
(Ladles, REK?))

1987 - Rink/Cordin

meneryan - calcification?

NARAYAN

Dr. Narayan GI  
2999 Report lto

Dr. Stollen

918-2625



JFK: no war with SU over — Tank units  
OR — Cuban missiles!

(risk? a nuclear risk

What does a plebiscite in Cuba mean that  
the risk is?

All Escalation gone

"Foggy with the Minutemen"

(Acheson was backing away from  
this refusal ever after!

Do they! Berlin '61

Cuba '62

VN up till 1968



Pietrobon

6-21-12

Hall - "our little spider" quote

Kentledge, "Handling the Gimpagos Crisis," Int. Es.  
vol. 8, No. 1 summer 1983 46-66

Not too much Chronology - After 1988?

Lawrence Cheng

Donna Rink

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